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## IV. COLONIES AND COLONIAL GOVERNMENT.

**A Colonial Bureau of Information.**—An institution of great practical interest to Americans at the present time is the recently organized *Office Colonial*, a branch of the French Colonial Ministry. Situated in the historic *Galerie d'Orléans* of the *Palais Royal*, the office has for its object to furnish accurate and official information upon all subjects connected with the colonies, for the use of intending investors, emigrants and business men generally. It is a bureau of information. France is land-poor; in spite of her enormous colonial empire she is without the means of developing it. All the world knows of the stationary condition of her population. The French themselves have become uneasy over this sign of decadence and a parliamentary commission has just been appointed to study the evil and propose "remedies." Whatever the causes of the existing conditions may be, the truth of the matter is that France with her stationary population is not an "expansive" country, therefore the French colonies are not peopled with Frenchmen. This circumstance, together with the burdensome trade restrictions imposed by the mother country, has led to colonial stagnation. Recently the danger of such conditions has been brought home to the French public by the trend of international events, and strenuous efforts have been made to strengthen the colonies and to bind them more closely to the mother country. Realizing that the only way to retain control of her colonies was to people them with her own citizens, France has devoted her energies to the task of encouraging emigration and investment in colonial enterprises. The old bureau of information for Indo-China, established in 1898, has become the present *Office Colonial*. This office is divided into four different branches or bureaus: 1. Colonization and Emigration. 2. Commerce. 3. Statistics. 4. Library. Of these the second is of especial importance.

*Commerce.*

The section of commerce is by far the most valuable and important part of the *Office Colonial*. In this section is published the monthly "*Feuille de renseignements*," or bulletin of information, which forms the principal work of the bureau. The bulletin has a circulation of about fourteen hundred, chiefly among newspapers, chambers of commerce, colonial societies and individuals interested in colonial affairs.

It contains articles on all topics of a colonial nature. The value of this publication is attested by the frequent correspondence which it occasions. Especially noteworthy is the advertising function performed by the bulletin. Along this line the "*Feuille*," has succeeded

in bringing colonial and home producers and consumers into relations with each other in a way impossible for the ordinary newspaper. Again, the section of commerce publishes a complete list of agricultural, industrial and mercantile enterprises in the colonies. This colonial business directory, needless to say, is of great practical value to home producers. A special collection of newspaper clippings upon colonial topics is also made for the section and has proved of much utility to those consulting the office.

The French press, after having so long neglected the colonies, is now coming to a vivid realization of their importance, and, with characteristic French enthusiasm, is devoting vast quantities of space to colonial affairs. The same is true of the magazines. France has a second and more acute attack of colonial fever, and it seems highly probable that she will issue from the present epoch of colonial excitement with much better and more lasting results. The press clippings which are collected for the section of commerce have been found almost invaluable because of the wide range of topics included. Various expositions of colonial products, *e. g.*, coffee, rice, etc., are being prepared, and along this line the section is rapidly reaching the stage of a commercial museum for colonial products. Finally, the section of commerce carries on an extensive correspondence with commercial and manufacturing houses interested in raw materials from the colonies and has proven of considerable value in furthering the sale of French manufactured products in the colonies.

In regard to this latter point, the sale of French manufactures in the colonies, France has consistently pursued the course so disastrously followed by Great Britain before the American Revolution. The French have regarded their colonies too much in the light of mere markets for French exports. This policy would have been intolerable to British colonists and it may even be said that French colonists would resist were it not for the fact, already mentioned, that the colonies are sparsely settled by the French. The result has therefore been not revolution but stagnation. France says to her colonies, "Buy either French goods or nothing," and they accept the second alternative. It may be imagined that such a policy makes it doubly necessary for the French Government to provide some means of facilitating commercial intercourse between colonial and home consumers and producers. The section of commerce has been a potent agency in this direction. A visitor who desires information, for instance, upon the possibility of finding some substitute for Manila hemp because of the Philippine war, has at his command a complete index of newspaper and magazine articles upon the subject, if any exist; he may also send to the office for more detailed information

regarding the cost of such a substitute. The office immediately commences a correspondence with planters in the colonies and samples are sent. Arrangements are now being made for a more general and permanent exposition of colonial products so that in the near future the purchaser will find his samples already at hand. If the nature and general value of the product be well known, the purchaser has only to consult the colonial business directory to find a complete list of producers of the article in the various colonies. Less difficulty is, of course, experienced when the office is called on to indicate for the colonist some French manufacturer of a certain line of goods. The usual method pursued is a simple insertion in the "want" columns of the monthly bulletin or "*Feuille*," and this is ordinarily found to be sufficient.

### *Emigration.*

An interesting function falls to the lot of the section of emigration and colonization, viz., to promote emigration to the colonies and to further the investment of French capital in colonial enterprises. It has been well said that the reason why Frenchmen do not emigrate to the colonies is that they are better off at home. If the wealth of France were being divided by a rapidly growing divisor, *i. e.*, if the population were increasing at a rapid rate, as in Germany, a large and constant stream of emigration would be in evidence, and this emigration would naturally turn toward the French colonies. But this is not the case. French colonies are suffering from the disinclination of the families at home to "divide the patrimony." Here again, the aid of the "*Office Colonial*" and of various private societies is invoked. The "*Office*" is charged with the duty of placing at the disposition of intending colonists all the information regarding the colonies of France, the economic opportunities which they offer and the qualifications necessary for success, which are obtainable, together with such other advice and assistance as lie within its power. This duty falls to the section of emigration and colonization.

Emigration is largely promoted by the "Society for the Assistance of Colonists," and by other associations which provide for the transportation of suitable families to the colonies, and, in some instances, furnish them with limited outfits. In his annual report, covering the first nine months of the existence of the office, the Director, M. Auricoste, records 417 persons, including women and children, whose emigration to the colonies was assisted in various ways. A large number of these were transported free of charge, while others received transportation at reduced rates. With many of the emigrants the

usual expectations of an El Dorado in the new colonies were prevalent. To the credit of the "*Office*" it should be reckoned that many ill-prepared, technically uneducated persons, entirely unsuited for colonial enterprises have been turned back by the counsel and advice of the officials in the section of emigration and colonization. The demand of the colonies is for capitalists and mechanics, not for the untrained or the shiftless class.

The section of emigration and colonization further performs a highly important duty in its relations with those contemplating investment in colonial enterprises. As the section of commerce conducts an extensive correspondence for intending purchasers or sellers to inform them of colonial conditions, so the section of colonization puts forth its best efforts to secure information regarding opportunities for investment in the fields of rice culture, coffee-growing, cattle-raising, farming, fisheries, railways, brickmaking, building, etc. These are a few examples taken from the numerous instances which have passed through the office in the first nine months of its existence. It has, therefore, become customary for capitalists to consult with the officials of this section relative to investments in the colonies.

A word should also be said regarding the library and statistical services of the office. The library is small compared with such collections as that of the Colonial Institute in London, but is rapidly growing and becoming an acknowledged centre for those interested in colonial subjects. The statistical bureau has begun the collection and publication of an annual series on the trade and navigation of all the French colonies, while numerous statistical compilations are published from time to time in the "*Feuille*."

This, briefly outlined, is the institution upon which France builds her hopes of reviving colonial trade. It is well organized and maintained at a high degree of efficiency. Only the future can tell what effect it will have upon the uncertain fortunes of the French colonial empire, but for Americans it is of the deepest significance.

In spite of the tons of literature which have been written about our new possessions, we are still comparatively ignorant regarding their real possibilities. The danger for these newly acquired islands lies not so much in their possible misgovernment by American carpet-baggers as in the ignorance of the American people concerning the economic resources of these new territories and the policy to be adopted toward them. The simplest and most effective method of dispelling this ignorance would be to establish some great bureau of information, such as the "*Office Colonial*," where full information on all subjects connected with colonial products, climate, land, people and resources generally could be obtained. It seems improbable that

monetary assistance to emigrants will be necessary for some considerable time to come, but information concerning colonial conditions for both intending colonist and investor should be made as accessible as the circumstances allow. The publication of a periodical sheet containing the latest authentic news upon colonial conditions generally and their special needs and requirements, together with advertising matter relative to the colonies, would in itself be an invaluable aid to colonial prosperity. Add to this a permanent exposition of colonial products and a "section of commerce" similar to that in the French "*Office*," and we should have an indissoluble bond between colony and parent country, a bond which would forever prevent the rise of economic and political misunderstandings. A special executive department for the government of the new dependencies is now only a matter of time, but, whether or not such a department is organized, it seems imperatively necessary that some distinct agency be established to act as a bureau of commercial information and to afford authentic knowledge of economic conditions in the colonies.

**The Cuban Census.**—The recently completed census of Cuba has been published by the War Department and is a most valuable document. Not only has the usual information of a statistical nature concerning population been included, but also a considerable amount of material upon the political organization, the geography, the flora and fauna and the history of Cuba; while numerous illustrations, maps and documents are given. Great credit is due to those who have compiled this valuable handbook.

The total population, including the Isle of Pines and the neighboring keys, was on October 16, 1899, 1,572, 797. The latest prior census was taken under Spanish authority in 1887, at which time the population was reported as being 1,631,687. The loss in the twelve years amounted to about 3.6 per cent of the population, but this only expresses a portion of the loss resulting from the recent war, since the natural increase of the population would have brought the total up to a very much higher figure. It is estimated that the total loss was not far from 200,000. The area is about 44,000 square miles and the density of population varies greatly in different provinces, being lowest in Puerto Principe. There are sixteen cities having a population of 8,000 or over. Havana has a population of 235,981. The urban population of the entire island in cities of 8,000 or more is 507,831, or 32.3 per cent. Nearly all of the Cuban cities are situated on the east coast. There is an excess of 57,613 males above the female population, or 3.6 per cent. In this respect Cuba differs from the neighboring West Indian islands, such as Jamaica, Porto Rico and the Bahamas. It is likely that this excess will increase rather than diminish in the next

few years, by reason of extensive immigration. Eighty-nine per cent of the population were born on the island; 8 per cent in Spain; 83 per cent of the population claim Cuban citizenship; 11 per cent at the time of the census had not declared their intention. The males of voting age numbered 417,993, or 26 per cent of the total population. Of this number 44.9 per cent were whites born in Cuba, 30.5 per cent colored, mostly born in Cuba. About 70 per cent were Cuban citizens. The native whites constitute 57.8 per cent of the population and they are grouped so as to form a majority of the population in every province except in the city of Havana. Here the white population is still in the majority but is largely composed of foreign elements. Thirty-four per cent of the population are able to read and write.

From these results of the census it appears that the Constitutional Convention now in session will be able to found a representative government upon the basis of native white supremacy, thus avoiding what has been considered the chief obstacle to Cuban self-government, viz. the predominance of the colored element. A restricted suffrage will, however, be found advisable, if not absolutely necessary, for the permanence of such a system of government.